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This paper is concerned with the grammar of cognate constructions, which are defined as those in which the object and verb have the same meaning ("I drank a drink of water"). In the transformational process of dissimilation the verb is replaced by "have" or "do," so that verb and object are less alike. The model used i" the case grammar of C.J. Fillmore ("The Case for Case" ED 019 631). Types of English cognate constructions are examined in detail. The conclusion is reached that context-bound meaning is the property that distinguishes dissimilative pro-verb behavior from main-verb behavior. Specific verbs when used as pro-verbs lose their grammatical-semantic features and become configurational function words which take their meaning from the constituents in their sentential frame. (KL)

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Syntactic Dissimilation*

by

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*This is a longer version of a paper delivered at the Linguistic Society of America Summer Meeting at Ann Arbor in July of 1967. I am indebted to C. J. Fillmore of The Ohio State University for many valuable suggestions in the preparation of this study.

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In this paper I am concerned with the grammar of cognate constructions. Traditionally, cognate constructions are defined as those in which the object has the same meaning as the verb. In terms of deep structure, cognate verbs and the nouns they govern share essentially the same set of semantic features. Formally, cognate verbs govern a class of objects in which the generic noun is based on the same morpheme as the verb. This is the case, for example, in dream a dream, drink a drink, and feel a feeling.

1.0. Dissimilation.

What the transformational process of dissimilation does with cognate constructions is to replace the verb with a pro verb.[1] In the case of

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[1]Rodolfo Lenz, in La oración y sus partes uses the term "pro verb" to refer to ser and estar 'to be;' to tener 'have,' and hacer 'to do or make.'

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cognate verbs with generic objects, it can properly be said that dissimilation makes the verb and its surface object less alike. If we observe the behavior of the verb drink, for example, we find that it permits, and in some cases requires, syntactic dissimilation. In the sentence, (1),

(1) I DRANK A DRINK OF WATER,

we can substitute for drank either took, as in (2)

(2) I TOOK A DRINK OF WATER,

or had, as in (3)

(3) I HAD A DRINK OR WATER.

These pro verbs are not always interchangeable, and they are not always

optional. In the case of string (4),

(4) I DRANK A DRINK WITH BILL,

we are required to substitute had for drank, to produce (5)

(5) I HAD A DRINK WITH BILL.

Next, if we examine the cognate phrase think a thought, we note that it, too, has at least two possible dissimilations. We can say (6)

(6) I HAD SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE MATTER,

or (7),

(7) I GAVE THE MATTER SOME THOUGHT.

The paraphrase of (7) can only be (8),

(8) I GAVE SOME THOUGHT TO THE MATTER.

However, notice that we cannot say (9),

(9) *I GAVE SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE MATTER.

I believe the differences between (6) and (8), I had some thoughts about the matter and I gave some thought to the matter, can best be captured within the framework of case grammar recently proposed by Fillmore.[2] In Fillmore's model, it will be recalled, the subject noun

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[2]See C. J. Fillmore; "The Case for Case," to appear in Emmon Bach and Robert Harms, eds., Proceedings of the Texas Symposium on Language Universals, April 13-15, 1967. (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston).

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belongs to the agentive category when it denotes the animate initiator of activity, and to the dative category when it identifies the animate experiencer of whatever is denoted by the verb. Within this framework we would say that the verb think can occur with either a dative or an agentive subject, and that its cognate thought is a factitive object

which can co-occur with an objective phrase. The factitive (F) is the category of the object that results from, or is created by, the verbal activity. The objective (O) is the category of the semantically most neutral object. All of these subject and object categories are represented at the sentence level by noun phrases; and all of the noun phrases are associated with prepositions. The selection of these prepositions, as well as the selection of the pro verbs, depends on the choice of the verb type, and on the category of the subject. For example, when the verb think occurs with a dative (D) subject, it requires the pro verb have, and it selects the prepositions of or about under O. When the subject of think is agentive (A), its pro verb is give and the O preposition is to. The difference, then, between I had some thoughts about the matter and I gave some thought to the matter is a difference in the category of the subject. Similarly, in the case of drink, the A subject governs the selection of take, while the selection of have is governed by a D subject, which may co-occur optionally with a comitative (C) phrase.[3]

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[3]It should be noted that there are verbs other than think and drink which may take either an A or a D subject. For example, consider the behavior of forget, hear, listen and so on.

1.1. The F object is required by at least two classes of verbs. For example, 'inner object-verbs' like think require cognate F objects that either result from the verbal activity, or are uniquely associated semantically with the verb. F verbs include also examples such as make in make a cake, whose objects are created by the verbal activity, but are not necessarily cognates. Both of these types of factitives can

regularly co-occur with O phrases. In short, these verbs can govern two objects within a simplex.[4]

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[4]In the framework proposed by Chomsky in Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, Cambridge, MIT Press, (1965), the simplex is defined as having only one object. It would not be possible, therefore, to place this study within his framework, since it is the case that there are numerous simple sentences having two objects.

Examples of dissimilated sentences in English are really quite numerous. Just to cite two very common ones, we observe that (10),

(10) I HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE ABOUT IT

presupposes, and obligatorily replaces (11),

(11) I KNOW SOME KNOWLEDGE ABOUT IT;

and (12),

(12) I HAD A DREAM ABOUT IT,

presupposes (13),

(13) I DREAMED A DREAM ABOUT IT.

Similarly, we have (14)

(14) WE HAD A FIGHT ABOUT IT,

which presupposes (15);

(15) WE FOUGHT A FIGHT ABOUT IT,

and (16),

(16) THEY HAD A GOOD LIFE,

derives from (17),

(17) THEY LIVED A GOOD LIFE.

1.2. Examples (10) through (15) all have two objects -- the cognate

nouns and the prepositional phrases. The object-status of the prepositional phrases becomes apparent when the cognate nouns are deleted. In (18), (19), and (20),

(18) I KNOW ABOUT IT,

(19) I DREAMED ABOUT IT,

(20) WE FOUGHT ABOUT IT,

the prepositional phrases under O are felt to be verbal objects.

1.2.1. Again it must be noted that the pro verbs are not always interchangeable. We can say (21),

(21) I GAVE A TALK TO THE CLUB,

for (22),

(22) I TALKED A TALK TO THE CLUB.

We can also say (23),

(23) I HAD A TALK WITH JOHN,

but not (24),

(24) *I HAD A TALK TO THE CLUB.

The selection of the pro verbs in (21) and (23) is again a function of the subject category. In (21) we have an A subject governing the selection of the pro verb <u>give</u> and the D phrase <u>to the club</u>. The frame for this sentence can be represented as [_F (D) A] indicating that the obligatory constituents are the A, the F, and the verb (V), as represented by the dash, and that we may optionally choose a D. If dissimilation does not apply, deletion of the cognate object is normally obligatory. Sentence (23), on the other hand, is represented as _D F C, where all three of the participants, including C, are required, and we must either dissimilate or delete the cognate object.

Notice incidentally that dissimilated sentences with A subjects can normally be passivized, while the D-governed, HAVE-dissimilated sentences can never be passivized. I will return to this question later.

1.3. From the preceding examples, it appears that the process of syntactic dissimilation involves, first of all, the presence of a cognate object, and second, the replacement of the cognate verb with a pro verb. But we note that there are many instances of what appear to be dissimilative constructions with verbs that have not consistently been defined as cognates. Intuitively, we would like to extend this analysis to cover (25),

(25) I {TOOK / HAD / GOT / GAVE} A LOOK AT IT,

and (26),

(26) I TOOK A WALK YESTERDAY.

I propose that the extension can be made on two grounds. First, it can be made on the basis of the fact that the alternation of such pairs as dream about it and have a dream about it parallels the alternation between look at it and have a look at it. Second, it can be made on the basis of the properties of what I have called the pro verbs.

2.1. The special properties of pro verbs.

The special properties of the pro verbs can be illustrated through an examination of constructions in which the cognate verb is replaced by the verb make. Notice that (27),

(27) I RECOMMEND THAT THEY RECONSIDER,

alternates with (28)

(28) I MAKE THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THEY RECONSIDER,

and that (29),

(29) I SUGGEST THAT THEY RECONSIDER,

alternates with (30),

(30) I MAKE THE SUGGESTION THAT THEY RECONSIDER.

It seems clear that the object of the main verb in the first two of these examples is recommendation, and that the object in the second two is suggestion. In other words, we recommend a recommendation and suggest a suggestion; we offer an offer and decide a decision; we propose a proposal and assume an assumption. And when we make a proposal, a decision, or an assumption, it is the result of syntactic dissimilation. This analysis rests, as I have indicated, on the properties of make in these constructions, and on what we may call the 'appositional' property of the underlying cognate verb.

Make is the generic factitive verb in English. All factitive verbs are make-verbs.[5] Generic make, and its specific substitutes are semantically

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[5]In addition they may be break-verbs, since an object can be created either by construction or destruction. We can make a dress out of the material, where dress is the F object and material is the O constituent; and we can tear a dress to pieces, where pieces is the F object and dress is the O. Underlying the second sentence semantically is make pieces out of a dress. This analysis also accounts for the simplex They made him president, an alternant of They made a president out of him.

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verbs of creating, converting, or destroying. This is the case, for example, in (31),

(31) MARY MADE A DRESS OUT OF THE MATERIAL,

in (32),

(32) MARY CUT A PIECE OFF (OF) THE CAKE,

and even in (33),

(33) MARY MADE TROUBLE FOR JOHN.

The verbs in all of these sentences have the grammatico-semantic features of the generic F verb. On the other hand, in make a suggestion, proposal, recommendation, the pro verb make does not carry the same semantic load as basic make. Rather, it takes its meaning from the configuration; and whenever the meaning of a verb is a function of the whole sentence, or is governed by one or more participants in its frame, we must assume that it is behaving, not as an independent lexical morpheme, but as a configuration-bound function-word. Proof that the meaning of make is configuration-bound in these examples, lies in the fact that in some instances, it is interchangeable with other, apparently non-synonymous, pro verbs. We can make an offer or give an offer, make a reply, or give a reply, and so on. In these cases, the meaning of the pro verb is the same as that of the underlying cognate verb.

One reason, then, for assuming that cognate constructions underlie all of the dissimilative sentences exemplified here, is that in each case, the meaning of the pro verb is determined by the underlying verb. Still, it might be argued that while dream a dream certainly underlies have a dream, make a suggestion presupposes the verb suggest alone, rather than a cognate construction. By way of answer to this argument, we note that the interpretation offered here has some additional formal justification.

2.2. Recall now that such verbs as suggest, recommend, and so on, were said to manifest an 'appositional' property. With these verbs, it

is unspecified in the simple transitive sentence. However, it can be made overt, as in (34),

(34) HIS SUGGESTION WAS THAT THEY RECONSIDER,

and (35),

(35) IT WAS HIS SUGGESTION THAT THEY RECONSIDER.

These are alternants of the passive sentence, (36),

(36) IT WAS SUGGESTED (BY HIM) THAT THEY RECONSIDER.

In both of these alternants, the object clause, that they reconsider, is in apposition with the F object, suggestion. This same relationship is observed when we convert the underlying transitive sentence into one of its topicalized alternants, (37),

(37) WHAT HE SUGGESTED WAS THAT THEY RECONSIDER.

I believe the alternant in (37) is clearly based on an input in which the F noun is suggestion. That is, it presupposes a stage in which we have The suggestion that he suggested was that they reconsider. Furthermore, a noun clause, whether it occurs under F or elsewhere, can only be said to be in apposition with another noun of the same category. It cannot be said to be in apposition with the verb itself. It seems clear, therefore, that underlying (34) through (37) we have the string in (38),

(38) HE SUGGESTED THE SUGGESTION THAT THEY RECONSIDER.

It follows from this analysis that the object clauses of such verbs as know, think, believe, hope, suggest, recommend, and an important list of others, presuppose the presence of F objects.[6]

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[6]Fillmore has proposed (Op cit.) that the complement S be limited to the case element O. According to the present interpretation, S may

also occur under F when the N is a generic cognate with a definite deber-miner. (We cannot say *John made a suggestion that Mary go).

3.0. The rules for dissimilation.

The rules for dissimilation can be stated in two simple steps:

I. Delete the generic cognate N under F (or 0)

II. Replace the V of V+ cognate N with the appropriate pro verb

The V sing has song as its cognate object and do as its pro verb. Deleteion of the generic object is optional with sing, as is dissimilation. Sing is classified as having the frame [_F (0) (D) A], where the F is realized as the noun song. The preposition that sing selects under F is normally ∅; the preposition under 0 is of or about. Thus, if we apply rule I to (39), we get (40) --

(39) MARY SANG A SONG ABOUT LOVE

(40)MARY SANG ABOUT LOVE.

It should be noted that in this interpretation, only generic cognate nouns are deletable. This means that the objects in (41) and (42),

(41) MARY SANG AVE MARIA WELL

(42) MARY SANG SOMETHING TO THE BABY,

cannot be deleted.[7]

[7]By allowing only generic objects to be deleted or pronominalized, we account for the fact that sentences such as Mary sings well have uniquely understood objects.

Next we note that rule I is optional with sing. If the generic cognate is not deleted, we may choose rule II -- also optional -- to

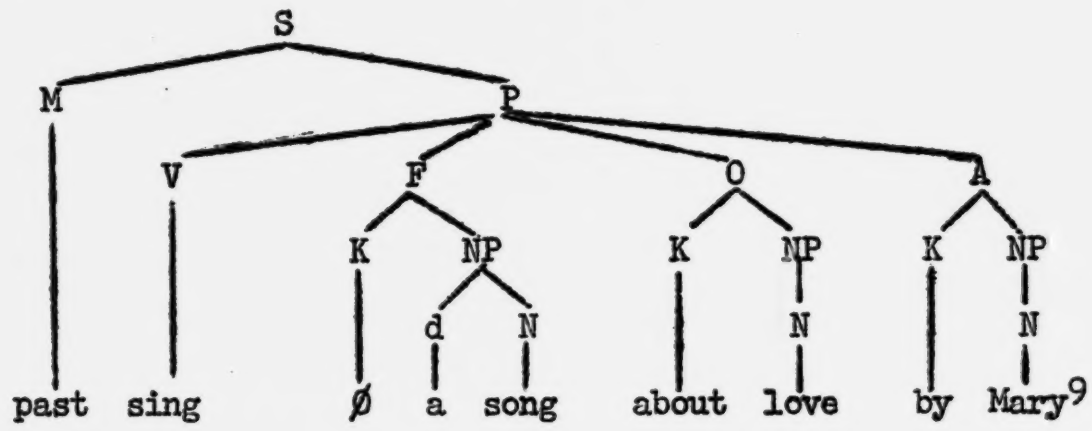
create (43),

(43) MARY DID A SONG ABOUT LOVE,

which is derived as follows:[8]

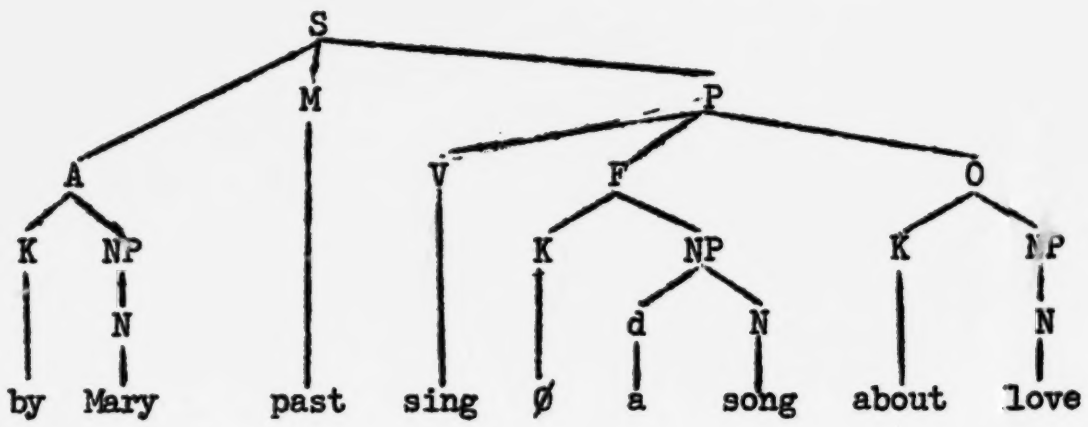
[8]It should be noted that verbs are subclassified not only by the case frames in which they can occur, but also by whether they require cognate nouns under F or O, and by whether they may (or must) undergo dissimilation.

(44)



[9]M is Modality, the node that provides tense and mood markers. P is Proposition, a tenseless sentence frame consisting of the V and the case categories it governs; d is determiner.

(45)



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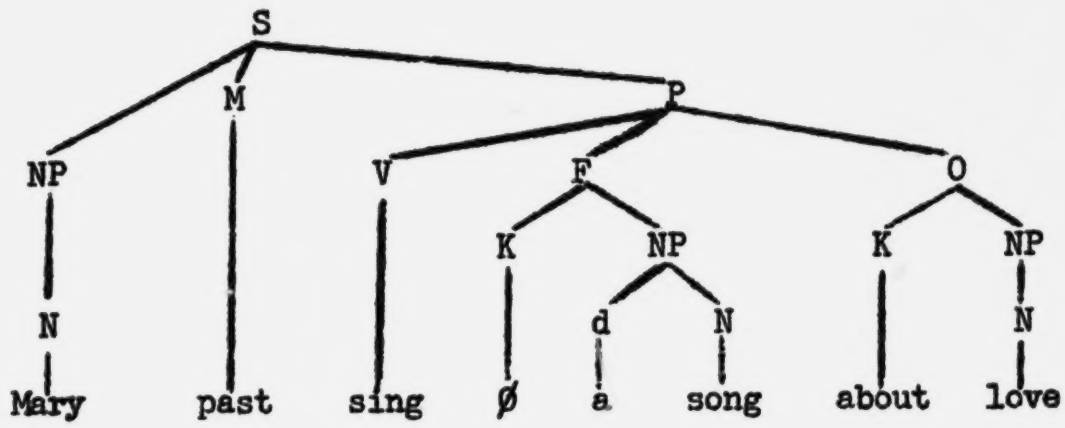
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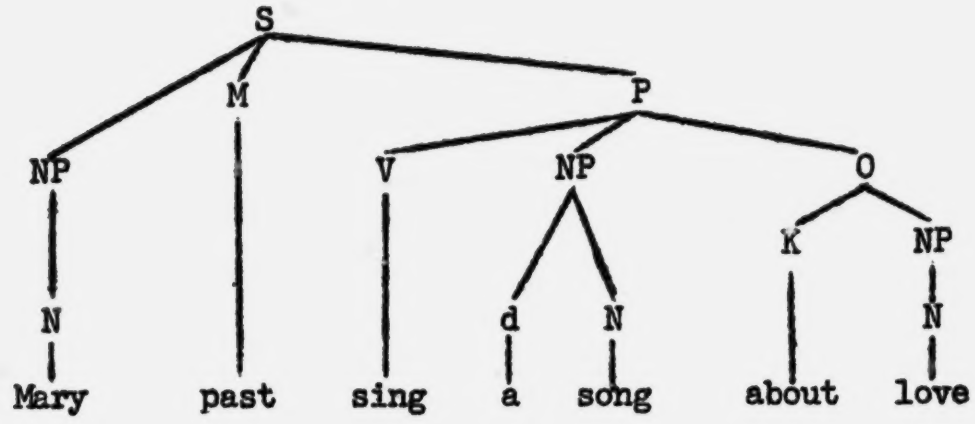
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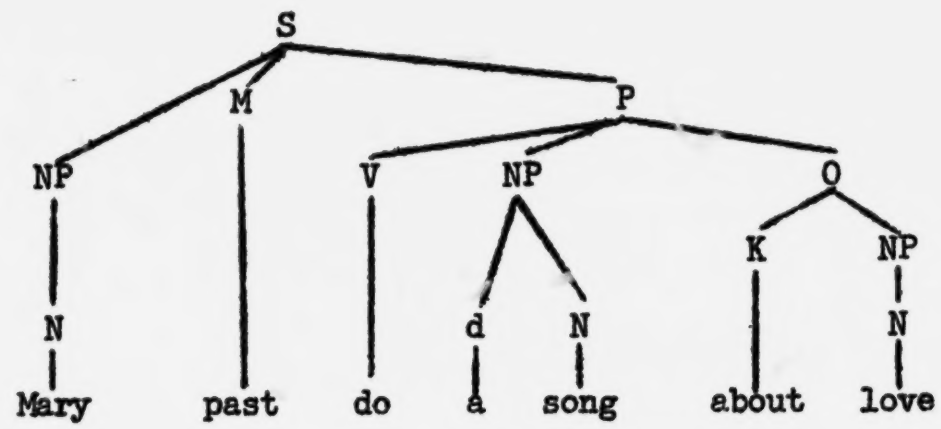
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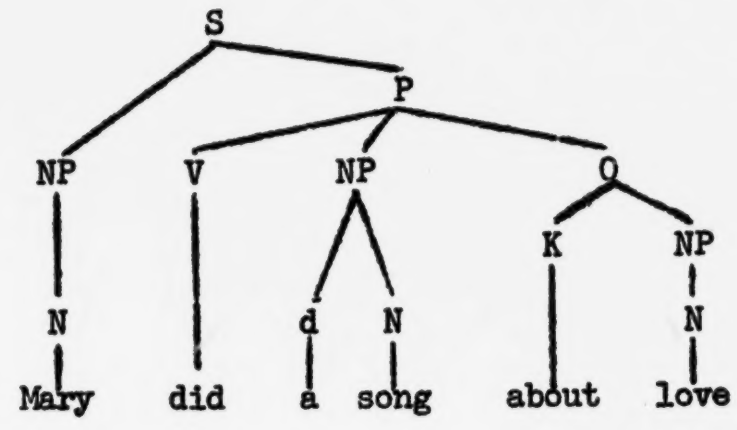
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4.o. Some effects of dissimilation.

Though there are some instances of true interchangeability of pro verbs, it seems quite likely that the selection is generally determined by one or more constituents in the frame. The list of pro verbs includes, in the main, get, make, take, have, give, and do. Although there are numerous other verbs that can occur in pro-verb capacity, their uses are quite restricted and sometimes unique to a particular idiomatic construction. I will not be concerned with these latter verbs here.

Have and get are governed by D subjects and dissimilated sentences with these pro verbs cannot be passivized. In the D-governed sentences, the subject is experiencing something, and the 'middle' or 'mediopassive' pro verb is required. Give, make and do, on the other hand, are governed by A subjects, and dissimilated sentences with these verbs can normally be passivized, as in (50) and (51),

(50) SOME THOUGHT WAS GIVEN TO THE MATTER

(51) THE SUGGESTION WAS MADE BY JOHN.

We cannot say, however, either (52) or (53),

(52) *A WALK WAS TAKEN BY JOHN

(53) *A DRINK OF WATER WAS TAKEN BY JOHN,

although the choice of pro verbs in these sentences is obviously governed by A subjects.

I believe the 'reason' why the passive is not possible for these take-dissimilated sentences is that the verbs drink and walk are reflexive in a special sense; namely that we have an optional reflexive D as an adnominal under A. That is, the adnominal obligatorily repeats the N under A. This reflexive D occurs in (54) and (55),

(54) HE DRANK (TOOK) HIMSELF A DRINK OF WATER,

(55) HE TOOK HIMSELF A WALK.

The pro verb take, therfore, is analyzable as a reflexive pro verb governed by the A subject and its optional adnominal D.

4.0.1. By way of illustration that English is not unique in its treatment of such verbs as walk, we note that the Spanish and French counterparts behave in much the same way. In Spanish, for example, we have (56) and (57),

(56) JUAN (SE) PASEABA POR EL PARQUE
'John was walking through the park'

(57) JUAN DABA UN PASEO POR EL PARQUE
'John was taking a walk through the park'.

Here the so-called reflexive construction is optional when the cognate object paseo 'walk' is deleted. When dissimilation is chosen for pasear(se) un paseo 'walk a walk,' the pro verb is dar, which, although its chief lexical meaning is glossed as 'give,' is used here idiomatically in the same sense that take is used in the English phrase.

Turning now to French we find such alternants as (58) and (59),

(58) JEAN SE PROMÈNE TOUS LES JOURS
'John walks every day'

(59) JEAN FAIT UNE PROMENADE TOUS LES JOURS
'John takes a walk every day'

The base for the French sentences contains the cognate phrase se promener une promenade 'to walk a walk.' If the object is deleted, se promène is required; if dissimilation is chosen, fait is idiomatically understood as se promener 'to walk.' Again, as in the Spanish examples, we see verbs which have, within certain dissimilative constructions, meanings which are not even remotely similar to their lexical meanings as main verbs.

5.0. In summary, it should be noted that context-bound meaning is the chief property that distinguishes the dissimilative pro-verb behavior of verbs from main-verb behavior. As pro verbs, take, make, and give lose their individual grammatico-semantic features. They become configurational function-words which take their meaning from the constituents in their sentential frame.